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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 6162
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000136

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARPI,
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SUBJECT: JEDDAH JOURNAL 5: INDIAN INTEREST IN ARABIA,
NEJDIS ALSO PREJUDICED, AUSTRIAN BUSINESS STRATEGY, AND
SAUDI WOMEN BLAMED FOR HARASSMENT

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller, for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

INDIAN EVENT SHOWS COMMITMENT TO STRENGTHENING SAUDI-INDIAN
TIES

¶1. (U) Local media have reported extensively on the Saudi interest in strengthening ties with India. The recent India National Day celebration in Jeddah provided evidence that the Indian Mission reciprocates that interest. At the entrance to the celebration, guests were offered samples of India tea and recordings of Indian music and Bollywood productions. Additionally, the Indian Consuls present passed out a wide variety of flashy, illustrated pamphlets lauding tourism and commercial opportunities in India. The most noteworthy offering among the more general commercial advertisements was a glossy 74 page booklet, printed in English and Arabic, titled "Indo-Arab Ties" published by the Consulate General of India in Jeddah in September 2005. This impressive and expensive-looking publication praising the two countries and their long history of commercial and cultural interaction, signifies a substantial commitment by the Indian Consulate to fostering the growing Saudi-India bond.

¶2. (C) During the Celebration, the CG stood with Indian Consul General Sayeed Ausaf and Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General, Dr. Abdulaziz bin Hussain Al Swiegh. While listening to them praise each other's country and the growing bonds of peace and commerce developing between the two nations, the CG watched on the large screen dominating the ballroom, film of the National Day Parade in Delhi. The display was dominated by ranks of goose-stepping troops and squadrons of tanks. Prominent in the display were the Indian Special Forces, widely reviled in the Muslim World for their actions in the disputed province of Kashmir. There was no public evidence anyone noticed or disapproved of the display.

NEJDIS ARE ANNOYED WITH HEJAZIS, TOO

¶3. (C) Post has often reported on Hejazi denigration of "backward" Nejdi behavior. At the Indian National Day celebration Pol/Econ Chief discussed this with British Consulate Political Counselor Derek Cooper, who has recently come to Jeddah after service in Riyadh. With no little amusement, he confided that Nejdis are inclined to

characterize Hejazis as "wayward cousins" in need of understanding, and perhaps a little discipline. He noted that Nejdis are far less open in expressing this opinion, reluctant to publicly acknowledge any division in the nation's unity. One must, he said, know them very well before a Nejdi will give voice to this prejudice.

AUSTRIAN BUSINESS STRATEGY IN SAUDI ARABIA: "GET YOUR MONEY AND GET OUT"

¶4. (C) Although widely acknowledged as an extremely risky environment, the flourishing Saudi economy is too tempting to ignore. Foreign consulates are agonizing over the best advice to give their countrymen about doing business in Saudi Arabia. At the India National Day celebration, Pol/Econ Chief discussed this issue with the Austrian Consul General. The Austrian asserted that their advice is to avoid long-term commitments. They do not recommend their citizens make any direct investment in Saudi Arabia under the current circumstances. They tell businesses "bring your product, sell it, get your money and get out."

IN SAUDI ARABIA AS IN AMERICA, SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS THE WOMAN'S FAULT

¶5. (U) In Saudi Arabia, as, unfortunately, in America, there are elements in society that blame women for enticing men to harass them. A story in the February 1 edition of the English-language Saudi Gazette reports sentences ranging from 4 months in jail and 100 lashes up to 12 years imprisonment and 600 lashes were imposed on members of a group of Saudi youths convicted of indecent assaults on two women in a pedestrian tunnel. Reports of similar attacks are common, but what makes this one unusual is that the attackers

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recorded their crime and the video was played in court and a picture appeared in the paper of a youth accosting a pair of women cocooned in the traditional abaya. (Note: Abayas are the traditional outer garment of Saudi women. Usually black, the abaya covers the wearer from head to foot and provides only a narrow slit over the eyes to allow a limited view. Wearing the abaya has been advanced as one reason Saudi women should not drive, because it severely limits vision and movement. End note.) The relatively harsh sentences brought some to the defense of the youths. The report noted that some defenders blamed the women for "the way they were wearing their abayas." One can only assume that the women's eye-slits revealed too much cheekbone and inflamed the susceptible youths beyond endurance.
Gfoeller